ECA/PHSD/HRP/89/24[5.5(OA)]

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Public Administration, Human Resources and
Social Development Division

LC/NAIROBI

REPORT OF ADVISORY SERVICES ON

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMMES AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER TECHNICAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH

November 1989

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Membership to the African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research stands at fifteen out of the possible fifty African State members of the OAU and the ECA. In addition to this low level of membership, the payment of assessed contribution by the majority of the members has not been at a satisfactory level, thus, constraining the operational capacity of the Institute. Despite various concessionary measures offered by the Governing Council of the Institute to facilitate payment, total outstanding arrears as at mid 1989 stood at nearly US$2.7 million.

This situation led the Governing Council to take a number of decisions at its Seventh Meeting held in June 1988 and also at the Extra-Ordinary Meeting held in May 1989. To this end a fact finding mission to be co-ordinated by the ECA, was commissioned. The report of the mission was to be submitted to the Eight Meeting of the Governing Council.

To carry out this decision, the Chairman of the Council requested the Executive Secretary to provide the necessary assistance. The request was granted and a total of 1 professional m/m was devoted through the services of Dr. Toga G.S. McIntosh, Economic Affairs Officer and the Liaison Officer with the Institute, within the framework of subprogramme element 5.5.

B. Nature of the Services

The long-term objective of the required services is to develop the institutional and operational capacities of the Institute. Three outputs were required:

(i) Advising on and planning for the joint AIHTTR fund and membership mobilization mission to a few selected countries;

(ii) Advising on and assisting with preparation of programmes and other working documents for the Eight Meeting of the Governing Council;

(iii) Participating as a team member an the Mission and assisting with the writing of the report.

II. ACCOUNT OF ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

A. Planning for the mission

Following consultations with the Director-General of the Institute, a draft aide-memoire was prepared. It was finalized following comments from the Chairman's office and circulated to concerned member States through their respective embassies in Addis Ababa. A final one day pre-mission planning exercise was undertaken among the team members in Nairobi.

Note verbals explaining the mission's objective were prepared and sent to the various Embassies in Addis Ababa for onward transmission to their respective governments, and requesting that they initiate the necessary follow-up action.

B. Preparation of work programmes and working documents

Assistance was given in the preparation of two main documents for submission to the Governing Council. The 1990/91 programme of work was discussed with the Director-General and suggestions made with regards to the general modalities of the three programmed workshops. The second document was the DG's progress report to the Council. We assisted with the session containing briefs on the UNDP preparatory assistance project.

C. Fact finding field visits

The field mission began on 31 October and ended 17 November. Other members of the team were Mr. J.K. Kioko, Under-Secretary for technical training and applied technology representing the host Government, Kenya, and Prof. M.F. Saad, Director General of the Institute. The Mission visited

Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Zaire and Zambia. Consultations were held with senior officials in the Ministries responsible for higher and technical education in these countries. The aims were to identify common obstacles that have constrained the payment of assessed contribution and membership growth; findings ways of removing those obstacles; and preparing the grand work for a high-level fund and membership mobilization mission to be composed of the ECA Executive Secretary, the OAU Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Council.

We took the lead responsibility in the preparation of the report. It was finalized and submitted to the Eight Meeting of the Governing Council on 23 November 1989 and is annexed to this report.

III. ECA FOLLOW-UP ACTION

The objectives of the Institute and its role in the development process of Africa is even more critical as the technological gap between the region and other regions of the world is getting wider and wider. This observation seems to be well known by the member States. What remains is getting the Institute to prepare itself adequately for playing that role.

Given the existing level of staff at the Institute, the chances of preparing for and playing of the role would be small indeed. As it were, ECA's assistance by way of backstopping, would need to be stepped up until such time when the staffing situation is improved. Specific areas that need urgent attention are:

(i) Programme development and preparation of a programme budget within available resources;

(ii) Project identification and preparation for the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources;

(iii) Financial control and management.

REPORT OF THE JOINT MISSION ON FUND MOBILIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

I. BACKGROUND

The African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research (AIHTTR) was established in 1980 through the ECA Conference of Ministers Resolutions 348(XIV) adopted in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco. Although membership to the Institute is open to all fifty African State members of the OAU and the ECA, only fifteen have, to date, acceded to the Institute's Constitution. Consequently, members of the Instiutte are Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia (Membership temporarily suspended), Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia.

The objective of the Institute is to assist member States in the development of adequate technical manpower capabilities. To carry out this objective the Institute is charged with the responsibility to undertake research in technical education and conduct training courses.

To this end, the Institute is to develop and operate at least ten multi-disciplinary centres. For the immediate future, four of such centres are to be developed. These are to be respectively for agricultural engineering and food technology, training trainers in technology, electromechanical engineering, and electronics and communications technology.

The Institute's ability to perofrm these activities has been greatly constrained by the lack of staff and facilities which is mainly due to the low inflow of assessed contribution from most of its members. Total receivable membership contribution since 1980, amounts to US$ 5,046,311.00 The amount remitted over the same period is US$ 1,604,742.00 which represents about 32 per cent of total receivable. The picture of the cash inflow position of the Institute is presented in Annex I this report.

To redress the deteriorating situation, the Governing Council adopted a number of measures including the writing off of 50 per cent of member States' outstanding arrears upto 1984 with the balance to be paid in four instalments. member States were also encouraged to pay their contribution in local currency through countries' UNDP offices which would in turn pay to the Institute the equivalent in US dollars. Other measures introduced included the hosting of the Institute's Workshops by members or seconding nationals to the Institute using local currencies which would be charged against their constribution.

Despite these measures, the situation failed to improve. Outstanding arrears as at mid 1989 stood at nearly US$ 2.7 million. Given the need for the Institute to execute its approved programme of work and to embark upon the capital development project, and given the urgency of the situation and its implications on the survival of the Institute, the Governing Council, at its Seventh Meeting held in June 1988 and also at the Extra-ordinary Meeting held in May 1989, called for a joint OAU, ECA, AIHTTR and the Host Government Mission to member States with a view to reversing the situation. The Mission was to be organized at two levels: A high-level Mission composed of the OAU Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chairman of the Governing Council, is to meet with the Heads of Government and States, to hold consultations on the matter. At the second level, a fact finding and preliminary funds mobilisation mission which would preced the high-level Mission, composed of senior officials from the AIHTTR , OAU, ECA and the Host Government is to visit some member States and hold consultations on the matter.

To implement the Council's decision, the present mission was constituted.

II. THE MISSION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Mission was composed of Mr. J.K. Kioko, Under Secretary (Host Government) and Chairman, Professor M.F. Saad, Director General (AIHTTR) and Dr. Toga McIntosh, Economic Affairs Officer (ECA). The OAU expressed regret for its inability to have a member on the team but reiterated its commitment to the objectives of the Institute. The Mission began work on 30 October and completed its assignment on 17 November 1989.

The long-term objective of the Mission was to improve the Institute's financial position to enable it to execute the programme of work and capital development project as approved by the Governing Council.

The operational objective was two-fold: one, to consult with relevant senior government officials in some countries on identifying common obstacles that have constrained the payment of assessed contribution and growth in membership and finding ways of removing those obstacles; and two, preparing the ground work for the high-level funds and membership mobilization mission.

To achieve the above-listed objectives, the Mission defined the following terms of reference:

(i) to explain and discuss the Institute's short, medium and long-term programme and programme objectives.

(ii) to identify the root causes of the meagre inflow of assessed contribution by Member States.

(iii) to look into reasons why the membership of the Institute is not expanding.

(iv) to work out a strategy and reach a common understanding on payment of outstanding and future contributions.

The Mission was mandated to visit Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zaire, Zambia, OAU and ECA. It was not possible to visit Chad, the OAU and ECA mainly due to flight connection difficulties within the time space that was available to the Mission.

In carrying out its activities, the Mission reviewed debates and decisions taken by the Governing Council during past meetings in relation to the mobilization of funds and membership drive. During the field visits, the Mission met with senior officials in the Ministries responsible for Higher and Technical Education in most cases and with officials in the Foreign Ministries in a few cases. The Mission is indeed grateful to the Institute for the secretarial support given to its work and is greatly indebted to the Kenya High Commissioners/Ambassadors and their staff in Kinshasa, Lagos, Egypt and Zambia for the valuable guidance, hospitality and assistance given while in their respective capitals. Finally, the Mission wishes to record its deepest appreciation and gratefulness to the Governments and [illegible] who received it and ensured that the objectives of the Mission were discussed and achieved.

III. CONSTRAINING FACTORS ON THE PAYMENT OF ASSESSED CONTRIBUTION

One thing which became clear to the Mission from the discussions was that Governments are willing to pay their contributions. However, their ability to pay had been constrained by a set of factors.

The first set of factors is the competitive demand on scarce national foreign exchange resources. This has been a long standing problem and one which is expected to linger on for a while for most Governments. As it were, Member States' foreign exchange reserves were dwindling in relative terms while at the same time, import demand particularly for goods, energy and intermediate industrial inputs, is on the rise, making it rather difficult for them to pay up assessed contributions in the required foreign currency. This problem is well known to the Governing Council and the Mission is aware of the policy decisions taken by the Council.

The second set of factors relates to the destabilisation of national economies witnessed over the last decade. Member States' survival and rehabilitation adjustment policies and programmes have forced governments into defining and re-defining, almost on a weekly basis, priority areas on which to spend. This has given rise to a series of reviewing exercises of

member States' participation in sub-regional institutions. It has also given rise to the streamlining of resource allocation and as such, the Institute getting less and less attention in this exercise.

Thirdly, member States' ability to pay has been constrained by a set of institutional factors. These factors have two dimensions. The first of these is at the level of member States. For the most part, a separate budget line in favour of the Institute has not been established in national budgets. Had this been built into the process as is with the case of Zambia, the question of payment could have been narrowed down to one of upward or downward adjustments during the formulation and subsequent approval of the annual budget and finding ways for transmitting payment to the Institute, and not one of seeking piece-meal approval as and when the case of payment is brought up. In addition, the frequency of staff turnover and the tendency to shift the Institute's affairs from one staff to another or from one Ministry to another have often given rise, to, among other things, inadequate follow-up of the payment procedures and arrangements. This aspect of the problem is most pronounced in cases where the newly assigned staff or Ministry is either pre-occupied with other matters or not adequately given supportive information documents and briefings on the Institute's affairs at the time of transferring responsibilities.

The second dimension of the institutional factors originates as a result of the vicious cycle in which the Institute finds itself. On the one hand, member States could be motivated to pay up if they were constantly being kept abreast on what the Institute was doing. They could have been motivated if the Institute had mounted activities which were felt as complementing their national development activities and efforts. At the other end, mounting meaningful training and research activities and sustaining a flow of information on both research findings and the Institute as a whole, are critically dependent upon member States willingness and ability to pay assessed and other contributions.

At the moment, the Institute is poorly staffed and short of facilities to carry out activities that could have generated and kept alive the interest of member States or to have developed and sustained a process of information flow. This poor status is greatly attributable to the poor financial position of the Institute. The end result, is an Institute whose activities are yet to make the desired impact and about which very little is known by member States and non-member States and consequently, an Institute which has been kept at the lower end of priority list when it comes to resource allocation.

The fourth set of factors which was stressed by a member State relates to the inter-action and payment schedules of member States. The attitude and action of one member towards the payment of dues could influence the attitude and action of another member. If the majority of members are consistently in arrears of their payments, as is with the present situation, the few that have made some efforts could become discouraged and either withhold contributions or question the rationality of their membership in and payment to the Institute. The impact of this factor goes beyond member States into the donor community whose attitude towards the Institute is primarily influenced by the level of practical commitment on the part of member States.

IV. STATUS AND ACTION ON PAYMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMBER STATES VISITED

ZAIRE

1. The Mission met with the Secretary General of scientific research who indicated that the Institute's affairs had just been passed over to his responsibilities.

2. The Governmnet of Zaire had, a few days before the Mission's arrival, reviewed Zaire's assessed contribution outstandings with various institutions/organisations and a list compiled of those which are to be given prompt action.

3. The Secretary General pledged that if the Institute is included in the priority list, then payment would be made as soon as the administrative arrangements are completed. If, on the other hand, the Institute is not included in the list, then his office would do all it could to have it included.

NIGERIA

1. The Mission met first with the Director of Technology and Science Education and eventually with the Director of the Ministry of Higher Education himself. Both stressed the importance of technology in Africa's development and the vital role to be played by the Institute in this regard.

2. Another meeting was also held with the Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

3. Action had been initiated by the Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the University of Lagos, to host a Workshop in fulfilment of the Institute's programme as a way of defraying Nigeria's contribution to the Institute. These efforts had not materialized up to the time of the Mission. The Mission was assured that new moves are to be undertaken to ensure that the Workshop be organised.

4. The Ministry of Technology and Science Education is now playing a greater role in the promotion and development of the Institute's programmes. In this regard, the Ministry would collaborate with the Ministry of Science and Technology in seeking Government's support, resource mobilisation and the hosting of Workshops.

5. At a recent meeting, the Government initiated a review exercise to take a closer look at Nigeria's membership in the various institutions/ organisations with particular attention paid to the cost implications and the relevance of a particular programme to the development objectives and strategies of Nigeria.

6. The Mission was assured that given the importance which Nigeria had attached to the role to be played by the Institute, the Government is commited to seeing the Institute succeed and would offer all necessary support to this end.

GHANA

1. The Mission met with the Acting Chief Director, Higher Education Division, who said that the Ghana Government was fully aware of its obligations to the Institute as well as the importance of the Institute in Africa's development.

2. The Government had, upon receipt of notice that the Mission would be visitng Ghana, met and agreed to put into motion payment procedures to pay up the arrears. To this end, a letter had been prepared by the Ministry of Higher Education to the Ministry of Planning and Finance seeking approval for payment.

3. Should it become necessary, the Government would consider using one of the four options proposed by the Governing Council in the payment of its arrears and future contribution. A final decision on the matter would be communicated to the Institute in due course.

SENEGAL

1. The Mission met with the Director of Cabinet in the Ministry of Higher Education. The Affairs of the Institute had just been given to the Ministry following its separation from the Ministry of Education which had in the past been responsible for the Institute.

2. The Government of Senegal had taken a major decision to withdraw its membership from a number of institutions/organisations in the light of a review exercise. Those affected institutions/organisations had been placed on a list, and it was not certain if the Institute was one of the affected institutions.

3. Efforts to get the clarification before the departure of the Mission from Senegal were fruitless. The Mission was however promised that as soon as the information was obtained, it would be communicated to the Institute.

EGYPT

1. The Mission held discusisons with H.E. Ambassador H. Gad El Haque - Director of Africa Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who stressed his Division's sympathy and support to the Institute.

2. While the country is fully committed to the cause and objectives of the Institute and sharing its plight, the Division will make every possible effort to bring the Institute's needs to the attention of the relevant high Government circles for appropriate decision.

3. The country's willingness to host the Institute's Workshop on Food Technology is confirmed as means of reducing the arrears owed to the Institute.

ZAMBIA

1. The Mission held discussions with the Deputy Permanent Secretary who underscored his Government's conviction in and commitment to the development of Science and Technology training and Research institutions within a regional and sub-regional framework.

2. A budget line entitled "African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research" has been establised within the national budget. The remittance made in July 1989 was approved in the 1989 budget. The 1990 budget is tabled for approval following which action would be initiated to obtain the necessary foreign exchange for transmission or to put into motion as one of the measures suggested by the Governing Council.

3. The Government is aware of its present outstanding arrears and contribution for 1990 and has included the total amount in the 1990 budget estimates. The Mission was accordingly assured that following the approval and the granting of foreign exchange, and subject to the prevailing exchange rate at that time, the Government would clear all its contribution by early 1990.

V. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Mission exchanged views of ways and means of increasing membership. The recommendations which follow in this report with respect to this issue reflect to a large extent some of these suggestions.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS, GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The financial situation of the Institute has reached a crisis point. Less than 35 per cent of all assessed contribution payable to the Institute since its establishment in 1980 has been paid. Supplementary inflow of funds from outside donors and special contribution from member States have not been encouraging as well. Yet, the Institute must survive. It must deliver the expected services and must exert its impact on the development of the African region. For this to happen, the financial situation will have to be improved.

Associated with the poor financial situation is the stagnation in its membership growth. Only 15 ECA/OAU member States are members with the "newest" member joining in 1985. The need for membership expansion cannot, in the view of the Mission, be over emphasized.

The growth and development of the Institute have been retarded mainly due to its weak financial position. Structural factors such as shortage of foreign exchange, economic recession and the subsequent adjustment programmes initiated for recovery are more so responsible for the meagre inflow of assessed contributions than member States' lack of commitment to and belief in the Institute. Other facotrs also playing a major role are institutional in nature and can be removed more easily and in a shorter time than the structural factors. These include the general absence of specific budget lines in national budgets favouring the Institute, the availability of the Institute to motivate governments appropriately and to be in constant touch with member and non-member States through its activities and marketing programmes.

A number of general observations emerged from both the Mission's discussions held with concerned government officials and the desk review of the situation. Among these are the following:

(i) That the objectives of the Institute and the role to be played by it in the process of Africa's development are considered very essential by member States and hence, they should spare no efforts to ensure that the Institute survives, develops the required technical and physical capabilities and be successful.

(ii) That the structural and institutional factors not-with-standing, periodic visits to member States, and follow-up reminders could improve the trend of financial inflow from member States to the Institute.

(iii) That much is expected of the Institute and member States would like to see and feel a linkage between the Institute's activities and their own national activities in the areas of technological development and research.

(iv) That the idea and spirit of regional co-operation in technology development were fully recognized and member States were prepared, if properly motivated and co-ordinated, to support the Institute.

(v) That with the relatively small number of members, the minimum financial resources required to develop the Institute's training and research programmes and its physical infrastructure can not be met from assessed contributions even if they were fully paid.

In view of the above mentioned and other observations, and in the light of its findings, the Mission humbly makes the following suggestions for consideration:

a) Funds Mobilization

(i) That consultations be held with member State governments at the highest level possible. In this regard, the high level fund mobilization Missiion as constituted by the Governing Council at its Extra-ordinary meeting, in May 1989 should be mounted. High on its agenda, should be the physical development of the Institute and the internalization of payment arrangement for the assessed contributions within national budgets.

(ii) That the Governing Council through its Chairman, transmit the main findings of this report to the substantive Ministries responsible for the affairs of the Institute in the member States.

(iii) That the Governing Council through its Chairman, draws the attention of those countries visited to the specific points understanding reached with them by the Mission, and urging the respective governments to take the necessary follow-up action.

(iv) That the Governing Council through its Chairman, requests the Kenya Government through the appropriate Ministry to advise the Kenya High Commissioners/Ambassadors in countries of accreditation which are members of the Institute to follow-up on the affairs of the Institute.

(v) That ECA and the Institute should work out a strategy for mobilising external funds especially crucially necessary for capital development.

b) Membership Drive:

(i) As a means of widely propagating the Institute and its objectives, member States should undertake to accord space and time in their mass media for publicising the Institute. This done frequently would create an important awareness of the Institute in the minds of the decision makers and others in member States.

(ii) Other African or regional information organs such as URTNA, which is based in Nairobi, could be approached to include the Institute in some of its programmes.

(iii) That the Institute through the Governing Council should identify potential countries in each sub region to act as the Institute's channels of promotion among other countries in the same sub region, who are not members to become members.

(iv) That full advantage should be taken of both the ECA and OAU Council of Ministers as tools and avenues of effective publicity and promotion of the Institute among African States.